

- a data formatting structure for storing linking information that associates the data elements with corresponding data formatting property modifiers;
- a header structure for storing header information defining a range for the data elements and a range for the linking information; 5
- each data formatting property modifier comprising:
 - (a) a size field comprising information indicating the size of the argument for the data formatting property modifier, 10
 - (b) a data type code field comprising a data type code indicative of a type of data structure to which the data formatting property modifier applies,
 - (c) an index field comprising an index into the property information array associated with the program module, and 15
 - (d) a special handling data field comprising information indicating whether the data formatting property modifier requires a special handling operation; and 20
- means for displaying the data elements in accordance with the corresponding data formatting property modifiers.
- 7. A method of formatting information in a program module operative in a computer system, comprising the steps of:
 - (a) providing a property modifier structure for storing groups of data formatting property modifiers and corresponding arguments that represent the appearance of the data elements; and 25
 - (b) inserting default values in a data type structure representing the appearance of data elements, the default values specified by a designated data type indicative of a type of data object for formatting to which a particular one of the groups of the data formatting property modifiers applies, 30
 - (c) locating the particular group of data formatting property modifiers from the property modifier structure, and
 - (c1) selecting a current one of the data formatting property modifiers; 35
 - (c2) accessing a size field (spra) of the selected property modifier to obtain information indicating the size of the data formatting property modifier stored in the property modifier structure 40
 - (c3) accessing a data type code field of the selected property modifier to obtain a data type code indicative of a type of data structure to which the data formatting property modifier applies; 45
 - (c4) accessing an index field of the selected property modifier to obtain an index into the property information array associated with the program module;

- (c5) accessing a special handling data field of the selected property modifier to obtain information indicating whether the data formatting property modifier requires a special handling operation;
- (d) comparing the data type code obtained from the selected property modifier with the designated data type code;
 - (d1) in the event that no match is achieved by the comparison of the data type code obtained from the selected property modifier with the designated data type code, then passing over the next portions corresponding to the argument size of the selected data formatting property modifier stored in the property modifier structure and returning to step c1;
 - (d2) in the event that a match is achieved by the comparison of the data type code obtained from the selected data formatting property modifier with the designated data type code,
- (e) determining if the index is within a known range for the program module;
 - (e1) in the event that the index is within a known range, then using the argument of the selected data formatting property modifier to apply formatting to the data elements;
 - (e2) in the event that the index is not within a known range, then passing over the next portions corresponding to the argument size of the selected data formatting property modifier and returning to step c1.
- 8. The method of claim 7, wherein the step of using the argument of the selected data formatting property modifier comprises the steps of:
 - determining whether the selected data formatting property modifier requires a special handling operation based on the information accessed in the special handling data field;
 - if so, then executing special handling code to process the selected data formatting property modifier;
 - otherwise, using the index to reference an offset in the property information array associated with the program module to determine an offset within a data type structure, and copying the argument of the selected data formatting property modifier to the offset in the data type structure.

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